# Reloading Coltsville: Using the Basics to Build a Narrative

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Despite working with firearms and material culture for a decade and being an Easterner for most of my life, the National Park Service and Organization of American Historians’ Scholars’ Roundtable on March 25-27, 2019 was the first time I had visited the varied sites of Coltsville. During tours of the many, often contradictory, sites that make up Colt, it became evident that the architectural remains showcase a distinct juxtaposition between the past and the present. These structures include the “blue dome” atop repurposed factory buildings, standard employee housing across the street, colorful Potsdam workers’ houses down the road, a lavish mansion belonging first to the family and later a home for women, open gardens that once held baseball fields adjacent to a modern art installation memorializing those who have died from gun violence, and a church that incorporates both Colt and his products into its very structure.1 All physically highlighted a common thread of dissonance, - a clash between past and present, culture and industry, historic guns and modern Hartford violence - one that manifested itself beyond the buildings and into discussion.

In addition to the scholars’ roundtable, I was also a speaker at the National Council on Public History’s annual conference and an attendee to the Sites of Consciousness-driven community roundtable on violence in Hartford. Continued conversations from all three forums centered around Coltsville as a historic site that can tell a range of stories from the traditional to the controversial. And while

1These sites are explained in the document provided to the scholars: National Historic Landmark Nomination:

“Coltsville Historic District.”

technically not within the scope of this essay, these experiences and added dialogue provided some much needed clarity on the topic of Colt and Hartford.

It became quickly evident that there are many stakeholders in the success of the site with varied opinions and backgrounds that will ultimately guide the vision of Coltsville National Historical Park. After touring the site, the condition of the historic buildings is of immediate concern and in need of preservation. Beyond the buildings is the overarching need for interpretation. To answer interpretative needs, there are many factors to consider. Some include different audiences, connections to Colt’s influence on firearms design to outside industries, links between Colt’s influence on guns and the community past and present, and the possible connection to the national gun debate. And with all those considerations, a genuine enthusiasm from everyone to tackle the world’s problems in one historic site.

Determining relevant narratives, prioritizing next steps, creating a plan, and executing it, all fall under the role of the National Park Service. The scholars chosen for this first roundtable presented all-encompassing backgrounds of expertise from American culture to architectural studies. As the scholar on firearms material culture and history, I work intimately with many of these diversifying narratives that arise from politically charged artifacts. Firearms open the door to understanding histories of technology, industry, manufacturing, art, sport, war, defense, crime, and violence. To name a few, they can inform political and legislative history, economic history, and socio-cultural history. Behind every one of those histories is one about people and the wide ranging impact of firearms on individuals and collective groups. This reflections essay cannot begin to discuss these wide ranging topics. My intention is rather to posit a way of thinking about

firearms-related history, a field that is not widely studied, to help the National Park Service better identify which narratives are most appropriate for the site.

Connecting the Dots – Understanding Firearms History2

In numerous lectures and articles, I have discussed the void of scholarship on material culture in the academic and public history fields. Most academic research falls under disciplines of political science, public health, sociology, or histories of law. Understanding firearms material culture from both technical and potentially controversial perspectives can be difficult to navigate, even for people who study it regularly. Firearms create many interpretive opportunities, but also come with limitations. There are few resources that find consensus in practical, logistical, legal, and conservation considerations for firearms. And furthermore, there are additional emotional, political and cultural implications in today’s society. As a result of contemporary political rhetoric surrounding firearms from all sides, these artifacts often are used to further an agenda, rather than to provide an opportunity for critical examination of their histories. Many people are well versed in the talking points, but there are fewer people who know the nuance of the history and even fewer who understand the material culture – leaving a dearth in museums and historic sites of professionals with the tools to educate the public and foster productive dialogue on the subject matter.3 Without a resource or greater knowledge of this history, it can then be difficult to evaluate visitor expectations

2 I have written and lectured extensively on this topic. This section is taken in part from an article I wrote for the

*Journal of the Early Republic’s Panorama on Engaging America’s Gun Culture*

*<*[http://thepanorama.shear.org/2018/09/17/its-complicated-the-short-answer-to-firearms-museums-and-](http://thepanorama.shear.org/2018/09/17/its-complicated-the-short-answer-to-firearms-museums-and-history/) [history/](http://thepanorama.shear.org/2018/09/17/its-complicated-the-short-answer-to-firearms-museums-and-history/)>. Accessed May 20, 2019.

3 The staff at the Springfield Armory is a terrific resource moving forward for this project.

and experiences in order to curate exhibits that can adequately convey the messages of the institution.

Firearms and their related histories can be interpreted in a variety of ways depending on the mission of the institution, type of collection, and current political climate. As previously stated, most academic histories focus more on socio- economic or political histories in which culture and context take center stage while the actual function and technology is secondary, and like rhetoric, sometimes used to forward a narrative. As a result, several of those bodies of research often mis- categorize or simply get the firearms information itself wrong.4 While that may seem pedantic, if firearms information is incorrect, the conclusions drawn from the misinformation could have been different. As a result of the lack of knowledge in the academic community on the guns themselves, the hole has been filled with collectors, online researchers, and hobby historians. Some have done a tremendous job researching technical information, but they are not all diligent researchers, and some perpetuate colloquial knowledge and mythology. Without a vetting process like a university or certification program, it can be difficult to identify which is which.5

As public historians, there is a real need to connect the dots between academia and collectors. Sites like Coltsville can become that middle ground to find

4 While there are numerous instances in which this happens, for reference, here are two from: Haag, Pamela. *The Gunning of America: Business and the Making of American Gun Culture*. Basic Books, 2016. She refers to the Hunt Volitional Repeating Rifle (the only example is in the Cody Firearms Museum collection) as “partially automatic” on page 32. Partially automatic is not a type of action. The Hunt has a tubular magazine and uses a manual lever to advance cartridges in the magazine and then a separate manual function to fire. It didn’t really work, hence why it wasn’t put into production. On page 51, she refers to the Henry repeating rifle as “self-acting” which is not correct and misleading to the gun’s function. The Henry is manually operated with a lever and manually loaded.

5 You will notice in Appendix C that many of the books for reference are done by these types of collectors and historians.

the value in both sides and present a clearer and more accurate history of Colt in a way that neither side has been able to combine. However, to get there, the National Park Service will need to understand both sides of the spectrum and every shade in between.

Does Everyone See the “Elephant in the Room?”

It was clear during the entire week that many in attendance were more comfortable and interested in the cultural and moral implications of Colt’s history as a lens for the modern gun debate rather than firearms history itself. Firearms in the modern American debate are deeply emotional and political subjects that polarize large groups of the population. All sides, as a result of the intensity of emotion, tend to draw conclusions, often before knowing the facts or considering other sides of the argument. Even though understanding one’s own bias is a major requirement of historians, politically charged artifacts and histories, like firearms, tend to be more difficult to distill.

When dealing with such a highly emotional topic, it’s easy to fall into the mentality that because one feels a certain way that everyone sees it that way. The first day of the roundtable, we tackled questions concerning more traditional topics surrounding Coltsville. The whiteboard we used to record our conversations listed further research for business history, an examination into Elizabeth Colt, industrial processes, labor, employee demographics, horizontal and vertical integration, guns, advertising and marketing, military and industrial complexes, arms dealing, business metrics, and urban renewal. The second day focused more on culture and potential morality narratives of interpreting a “gun site” in the 21st century. Based

on the different conversations among the scholars, National Park Service, and Organization of American Historians, I think a further exercise on identifying bias more carefully would provide clarity to reveal the narratives that fit the needs of the organization rather than ones we simply want to project. For example, some were quick to vilify Samuel Colt as a designer of “killing machines”, but upheld Elizabeth Colt similar to the greater local community, as the “First Lady of Hartford”

– a fascinating enigma. We discussed whether she would have guilt as a result of her position and therefore, her charitable work and establishment of parks and gardens could be a type of reparation. On the other hand, we also discussed the fact that maybe she was the mastermind behind the legacy of Colt after his death. Regardless, her role in the business, based on both public and academic conversations, did not seem to receive the same stigma as her husband. If Samuel is to be judged for being in the gun business, then so should Elizabeth. Other discussions criticized the atypical company town and Colt’s paternalism – finding a negative in his housing for employees and continuing education – yet at the forum on Friday night, the modern day Hartford community wanted to see a return to some of those programs. The existential examinations of the pros and cons of company towns held little relevance to the community who wanted practical solutions to violence in their hometown, asking for a return to public spaces like Samuel Colt offered. Understanding the multiple perspectives, can help find a balance in that narrative.

There also seemed to be an overwhelming desire, from multiple forums during the week, to connect Coltsville with the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school an hour away. One pop up exhibition at the National Council on

Public History took it one step further and connected all mass shootings to Colt’s original revolver design, the Paterson. At the community roundtable Friday night, the speakers for the forum spoke at length not only on the violence inside their city, but also the media and people’s lack of awareness for the tragedies in their homes. The members of the community felt that people are quick to ignore the reality and day-to-day tragedies in urban areas. Yet in instances of mass violence in suburban towns, there is a significant amount of media attention and calls for an end to the violence. Ultimately, both instances are tragic and no life lost more important than another, but perhaps after hearing the other side and knowing the state of the community, that the city, one that has changed directly as a result of Coltsville’s existence and later relocation away from Hartford, is a more relevant narrative.

While not saying there isn’t a connection, several questions should be addressed before proceeding with a focus outside the community as a course of narrative: is there a connection to Sandy Hook other than the fact that Colt made guns and a firearm was used in the modern day shooting? Is that one connection enough? How does it impact our understanding of Colt and Hartford? And to what end does telling that story advance our understanding of the site?

On the last day of the Scholars’ Roundtable, while talking about culture, it was asked if we should address the “elephant in the room?” The elephant being Sandy Hook. The question I later responded with was, before we assume a connection – one with which we think everyone will agree – we need to ask others from their perspectives, “Is there even an elephant?”

Audience and Expectation

There was much discussion on audience for the new Coltsville site. The anticipated visitors will be diverse and have their own set of expectations and backgrounds. A few categories of visitors who could potentially come to a site like this would be the community in and around Hartford, typical National Park tourism, and the gun community.

For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on the audience with which I am well versed, the gun community. This group of people can range from collectors to enthusiasts to owners and don’t have to fit a specific age, gender, race, or religious demographic. They can also be self-defense advocates, hunters, target shooters, or a combination. They bring diversified backgrounds united by their interest in guns.6 This audience would be drawn to a historic site about Colt but wouldn’t necessarily see that elephant – not because they are unsympathetic. In fact, most major gun organizations, such as the National Shooting Sports Foundation in Newtown, CT, are working towards the same goals as people who do not care for guns, with programs about violence, suicide, accidents and partnering with other national organizations.7 Some gun owners don’t necessarily see the elephant because they are aware of more wide ranging narratives and uses of firearms because of their personal interests. To them, just because a shooting involves a firearm, doesn’t mean it would be necessarily relevant to Colt. An examination of the history of guns

6 It’s important to note that many non-gun owners are also fascinated by gun history, as is evident in the demographics of the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

7 NSSF Project ChildSafe: <https://www.projectchildsafe.org/>; NSSF and American Foundation for Suicide

Prevention’s partnership: <https://www.nssf.org/nssf-afsp-suicide-prevention-partnership/>; Walk the Talk America and Mental Health Association: <https://walkthetalkamerica.org/>; NSSF & Department of Justice’s Don’t Lie for the Other Guy: <http://www.dontlie.org/>

from a fundamental perspective would better reveal the stories that this core audience to some extent already recognizes.

Primer on Guns

At the conclusion of my week in Hartford, it seemed I had more questions than answers, more areas to research and a seemingly endless number of narratives and directions for the National Park Service to explore. After reflecting on the events of the trip, the comments I made at the public presentation on Wednesday of that week still ring true. This site, so versatile, contradictory, and potentially chaotic, lacked a central focus – a theme – to unite the historic site. And with so many options and emotions around it, my recommendation to the staff, in addition to critically examining bias and audiences, is to start with the basics.

While less exciting, I maintain that content creators should put over-arching narratives and potential moral implications and conversations of the site off to the side, albeit temporarily, and focus on the fundamentals of the history and the basics behind the technology of the firearms. By doing this, content creators can correct factual inaccuracies, promote diversified and already captivated audience bases, catch narratives that under further inspection do not line up, and allow narratives that weren’t initially thought of to reveal themselves.

Several conversations arose throughout the week that showed a confusion in the basic technology. For example, we discussed Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 and the firearms used against Native people. Initially, we incorrectly identified a Colt Gatling Gun as a weapon used in the deaths of hundreds. In other parts of US history, I also suggested that there are other controversial topics that do have a

direct correlation to Colt. For example, in the 1929 St. Valentine’s Day Massacre, organized criminals used Colt Thompson submachine guns to kill their enemies. In discussions after the roundtable I was told that the two examples had been fused together with the assertion that Thompsons were used at Wounded Knee, even though they weren’t invented for another thirty years.

While that information was just incorrect and a mistake that would be mostly resolved through further research, knowing the basics can also easily debunk the use of firearms for rhetoric, especially when it jeopardizes accuracy. At the public forum on the third day of the scholars’ roundtable, one of the scholars made note of the dark irony of holding the discussion under the lens of several cannons in the room. The assertion was metaphoric and furthered his point quite eloquently, but the cannons were signal cannons - a cannon not used for death and destruction, but rather the opposite, to alert, warn, and get help in an emergency. The cannons too highlighted not a symbol of Samuel Colt, but rather the nautical adventures of his son – who was afforded the ability to travel lavishly because of money from the business. Another example arose in the public forum Wednesday about a Harvard memorial for Civil War soldiers and the question was asked, “how many of them had died at the hands of a Colt revolver?” An understandable instinctual connection, but upon further reflection, considering the function of the revolver as well as death records from the War, the number of deaths by Colts are most likely lower than the emotion evoked from the statement. Two-thirds of people during the Civil War were killed by disease. 8 Additionally soldiers were far more likely to be injured or killed

8 PBS:< <http://www.pbs.org/mercy-street/uncover-history/behind-lens/disease/>> Accessed May 22, 2019. Written by Stanley B. Burns, MD.

by cannon or musket fire, the standard arms of the military. In fact, according to the American Battlefield Trust, only 1.2% of all Union casualties from the Civil War were from pistols or buckshot (shotguns)9

In addition to the inaccuracies, discussions on history and the gun weren’t always symbiotic. The gun itself was more often used, as mentioned earlier regarding typical academic approaches to firearms history, as a secondary means to serve as an illustration to further a point rather than *being* a focal point. From my experience, all the narratives we discussed can also be told through the lens of the artifacts and items themselves.

At the end of the roundtable only one category was dedicated specifically to guns. There was some mention of Colt’s earliest revolver, the Paterson, as well as their iconic, Model 1873. The conversation touched on the Gatling Gun and the Thompson submachine gun. However, I noted that we didn’t really discuss the Colt Model 1911 semi-automatic pistol. This firearm, originally invented in some form dating to 1905, was modified and adopted by the US government and was the official handgun for the military until the 1980s. It is still one of the most common and reproduced firearms in current culture, used for law enforcement, defense, and sport. And while not significantly addressed during the roundtable, the handgun in general is the primary weapon of choice for modern homicide in the United States.10 While I am one of the first people to support a history of firearms that extends

9 American Battlefield Trust <<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/civil-war-facts>> Accessed May 22, 2019 Statistic taken from: Hughes, Mark. *The New Civil War Handbook: Facts and Photos for Readers of All Ages.* Savas Beatie, 2009.

10 2016 Crime in the United States: Murder Victims by Weapon 2012-2016. <[https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-](https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-4.xls) [u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-4.xls](https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/expanded-homicide-data-table-4.xls)> Accessed May 22, 2019.

beyond traditional narrative, it is imperative not to lose that “gun history” in the shuffle.

As I conclude this reflection essay, I want to circle back to the complicated nature of the site, whether physical or metaphorical. There is great potential for the interpretive plan but many cautionary steps to take to make sure it tells the correct story. Much like loading a Colt revolver, there are many steps to the process.

Loading each shot into the cylinder can represent a different story. The loaded gun holds weight for an over-arching narrative. But what happens after the trigger is pressed, is yet to be revealed.

# Appendix A

**Firearms Terminology**

*These definitions are used in the Cody Firearms Museum; they are a compilation of many different sources as well as the work of several individuals to modify them.*

*Firearms terminology is complex and, in some cases, constantly changing. There can also be different definitions for some of these terms, so use this as a building block.*

Big Terms:

**Gun**: a device with a barrel through which projectiles are propelled by explosive forces or expanding gasses – can include artillery

**Firearm**: a portable gun; however, it often is used interchangeably with gun

**Arms**: short for armaments; blades, bows, firearms, etc.

**Ammunition**: the material fired by a gun, including components such as projectiles, powder, primers, and cases

**Weapon**: an object used for inflicting bodily harm. The military refers to firearms as weapons.

*Note:* not all firearms are weapons, and not all weapons are firearms.

Parts of a Firearm

**Breech:** the rear end of a barrel

**Muzzle:** open end of the barrel

**Receiver:** also known as the frame, the part of the firearm that holds together barrel, hammer, and trigger

**Forearm:** a wooden or synthetic stock, forward of the breech, where a person can rest his/her hand

**Barrel:** the component of a firearm through which projectiles travel **Stock:** the wood or synthetic part of the gun that a user holds **Grip:** the portion of the firearm, typically a handgun, the user holds

**Cylinder:** the rotating portion of a revolver, consisting of multiple chambers

**Hammer:** the part of a firearm that swings to impart a blow to ignite the cartridge. Some firearms are hammer fire and others are striker fire, meaning that a striker is used to strike the firing pin.

**Sight:** instruments to align a gun to fire accurately

**Safety:** a mechanism designed to prevent accidental discharge. Can be either passive or active.

**Magazine:** a container, detachable or fixed, where ammunition is stored while feeding a repeating firearm.

*Note: not interchangeable with clip, a device to feed ammunition into a magazine*

**Bore:** the hollow portion inside a gun barrel

**Rifling:** spiral grooves inside a barrel used to spin a bullet, much like throwing a football

**Smoothbore:** an unrifled barrel

**Chamber:** the part of the barrel in which a cartridge is inserted before being fired

**Trigger:** a mechanism that activates the firing sequence. Basic Action Types:

**Action:** the way a gun operates

**Single Action:** a type of firearm in which the trigger does one major action. A person must cock the firearm before pressing the trigger to fire the gun

**Double Action:** a type of firearm in which the trigger does two actions both cocking and firing the gun

**Bolt Action:** a breechloading firearm that is operated by sliding a bolt

**Semi-Automatic (Self Loading):** a firearm in which one round is fired each time the trigger is pressed. The firearm fires one round and chambers another to be fired again.

**Automatic:** A firearm that fires continuously when a trigger is pressed and stops either when the trigger is released, or the firearm is out of ammunition

*Note: You may see the term, “Automatic Handgun” in Colt history. This is a*

*colloquialism for early semi-automatic handguns. They are not fully automatic.*

**Lever Action:** a firearm that uses a lever to chamber a cartridge and eject a spent case

**Break Action:** a type of firearm, often a shotgun, in which the action opens at the breech in order to load ammunition into the chamber

**Over/Under:** a type of shotgun where two barrels sit one on top of the other and are loaded at the breech. Another type of shotgun is a Side by Side

**Slide Action (Pump Action):** a firearm that has a moveable forearm in order to chamber a round to be ready to fire and eject a spent case after a round is fired.

Types of Firearms:

**Muzzleloader:** a firearm that is loaded at the end of the barrel

**Breechloader:** a firearm that is loaded at the rear of the barrel

**Carbine:** a gun with a shorter barrel than a rifle, usually 20 inches or less

**Machine gun:** an automatic firearm, either portable or mounted

**Submachine gun:** an automatic firearm that is portable and fires a pistol cartridge

**Handgun:** an umbrella term for a smaller hand-held firearm

**Pistol:** a handgun where the chamber is integral with the barrel. Sometimes the term is used as a colloquialism for handgun

**Revolver:** a type of handgun that has a revolving cylinder

**Rifle:** a firearm designed to be fired from the shoulder with rifling

**Shotgun:** a smoothbore gun (no rifling) that typically fires shot (smaller pellets)

**Modern Sporting Rifle:** a more modern term developed to describe a semi- automatic civilian rifle often based, but not exclusively, off an AR-15 that is similar in appearance, but differs in function, to the select fire military rifles of today.

**Assault Rifle:** a select fire, portable machine gun that chambers an intermediate cartridge, feeds from a detachable magazine, and can be carried by a single person.

*Note: The term assault weapon is a legal term that can mean many different things depending on the proposed legislation, but typically is used to describe modern sporting rifles with specific cosmetic characteristics.*

**Select Fire:** the capability to select between semi-automatic or automatic functions Ammunition Basics:

**Caliber:** The internal diameter or bore of a gun barrel

**Cartridge:** a type of ammunition that contains a bullet or shot, propellant, a primer, and a case

**Bullet:** projectile

**Shot:** collective term for a group of bullets or pellets

**Propellant:** usually gun powder or smokeless powder. After ignition, the propellant forces the bullet out of the gun

**Primer:** a catalyst to ignite propellant

**Case:** the housing of cartridge components. Can be paper, linen, metal, or

plastic

**Paper Cartridge:** an early cartridge composed of powder and projectile wrapped in combustible paper that serves as wadding to ensure the projectile is tightly held in the barrel

**Centerfire:** a type of self-contained cartridge that fires when a firing pin strikes a separate primer in the center of a cartridge case

**Rimfire:** a type of cartridge that fires when a firing pin strikes a priming compound in the rim of the cartridge case

**Gauge:** a term of measurement to describe the internal diameter of a shotgun barrel. It is determined by how many lead balls of that diameter make one pound; the smaller the bore (caliber), the higher the gauge number because smaller bores take more round balls to make up a pound.

*Note: The .410 bore is also a shotgun caliber that does not follow the standard gauge designation and definition*

**Shotgun shell:** a form of ammunition loaded with shot or slugs, designed to be fired from a shotgun.

# Appendix B:

*Firearms Evolution based on research for new Cody Firearms Museum. Like the definitions, it is a compilation of many sources and the research of several individuals. This is not the comprehensive timeline we used and note that a lot of this history has several options for dates, but it can provide a general overview for firearms development.*

950 CE: The fire lance, an early gunpowder weapon, appears in China 1287: hand cannons used in a rebellion

1267: Roger Bacon records gunpowder chemistry

1400s: matchlock, a firearm that works by igniting powder with a burning match, becomes first firearm with a formal ignition system

1498: rifling is invented

1509: wheellock, an advanced lock mechanism in which a serrated disk is spun slightly against iron pyrites to create a spark, is invented

Ca. 1550: Snaphance, an early ignition system that uses flint striking steel to ignite powder, is invented

Early 1600s: Miquelet lock, another firearm using flint, is invented. 1620-1625: True flintlock is invented

1789: Thomas Jefferson visits Honore’ LeBlanc of France to learn about

interchangeable parts

1794: Springfield Armory (1st federal armory is established)

1798: Eli Whitney, inventor of the cotton gin, secures a government contract to manufacture 10,000 muskets.

1800: discovery of fulminates (explosive compounds) is made by Edward Charles Howard

1802: Harpers Ferry starts production

1805: percussion ignition, which uses a hammer to create an internal spark in the breech of the barrel to fire a gun, is invented

1808: Jean Samuel Pauly invents an early form of self-contained cartridge. In 1812, he improves that design to be centerfire

1811: John Hall and William Thornton patent a breechloading flintlock rifle. Hall experiments with interchangeable parts

1817: percussion cap, a chemical compound that when struck ignites powder to fire a gun, is invented by Joseph Egg of England

1818: Wheeler and Collier flintlock revolvers (predating Colt) become first successful mass-produced revolving cylinder firearm

1824: Johan von Dreyse begins early experiments with the first bolt action 1829: True centerfire cartridge is invented by Clement Pottet

1833: U.S. Model 1833 Hall-North percussion carbine is adopted by government and uses interchangeable parts

1835: Colt receives revolving patent in England

1836: Patent Act. Colt receives two revolver patents that year

1845: Louis-Nicolas Flobert invents first rimfire for metallic cartridges

1849: Claude-Etienne Minié develops first conically shaped bullet and a rifle.

1855: Minié ball is refined and adopted for US service by James Burton. Rollin White patents a way to load a revolver from the backside of the cylinder; he sells the patent to Smith & Wesson

1857: Colt’s revolver patent expires, opening the market for similar revolvers made by other companies

1862: Gatling Gun, a repeating rifle battery, is patented. *Note:* Not a machine gun 1866: Springfield designer Erskine Allin develops a way to convert muzzleloading rifle-muskets into breechloaders

1867: Alfred Nobel patents dynamite

1872: William Mason and others design the Colt Model 1873 single action revolver

1877: Colt’s 1st double action revolver introduced

1884: Smokeless powder, a propellant used in firearms and artillery that produces far less smoke, is invented

1884: Hiram Stevens Maxim invents the first successful machine gun

1885: Ferdinand Ritter von Mannlicher creates first successful semi-automatic rifle. 1893: Hugo Borchardt creates first mass produced semi-automatic pistol. First

select fire rifle, the Mondragon, is exhibited at the Chicago’s World’s Fair 1895: Colt’s Browning machine gun is produced

1898: Antique firearms period ends. In America all guns except machine guns made before this date are considered “antique” rather than firearms by the federal government.

1902: Hiram Percy Maxim invents the firearms silencer

1905: Colt introduces the Model 1905 semi-automatic pistol. It’s modified and will

ultimately become the Colt 1911 in .45 Automatic Colt Pistol caliber

1910: Henry Ford’s assembly line is put into effect at the Highland Park plant in

Detroit after visiting Winchester

1917-1918: Browning Automatic Rifle and the Thompson submachine gun are developed

1918: Germans use a large caliber rifle, the T-Gewehr, as an anti-tank weapon 1921: The .50 Browning Machine Gun cartridge enters service as an anti-tank and anti-materiel round

1934: National Firearms Act is implemented. It is a federal act that regulates machine guns, silencers, and short barreled rifles and shotguns

1936: US adopts the M1 Garand semi-automatic rifle

1942: experimentation begins on the MKb 42, which will become the STG 44, the first production assault rifle, developed by Hugo Schmeisser

1954: Fairchild Engine and Airplane Corporation, creates ArmaLite to apply aeronautics materials to the small arms industry. 1st manufacturer of the AR-15 (Armalite-15)

1956: Eugene Stoner develops the AR-10; he and other designers, like Jim Sullivan, will modify it into the AR-15

1959: Armalite sells rights to Colt to produce AR-15.

*Colt Categories of Firearms:* Percussion Revolvers (1835-1860s) Cartridge Revolvers (1871-today) Semi-Automatic Pistols (1900-today)

Artillery: Gatling Gun (1860s-early 1900s)

Machine Guns (1895-today) Submachine Guns (1920s-1940s) Rifles (1830s-today)

Shotguns (1830s – today)

*One topic of conversation from the roundtable was the role of ammunition with Colt. There were many cartridges that bore the Colt name, often done in collaboration with designers. For example, the .45 Colt and the .45 Automatic Colt Pistol.*

*The term “killing machine” was thrown around a lot with Colt firearms during the*

*roundtable, but it’s important to note that these firearms were made for a variety of reasons including war contracts, law enforcement, defense, and target shooting.*

*Not all firearms are made solely for use against another person.*

*Gatling Guns are not technically machine guns. The 1862 Gatling Gun Patent awarded to Richard Jordan Gatling is mentioned in at least three places in National Historic Landmark proposal as a machine gun. In one instance, it states: When the*

*U.S. Army officially adopted the Gatling Gun, the world’s first effective machine, in 1866, inventor Richard Gatling arranged for the Colt Company to manufacture the weapon.”11 This is a common mistake made regarding the invention. In fact, it’s so common, a simple Google search for first machine gun, yields result for the Gatling Gun. The initial patent document (US36836A) does not reference machine gun in the text. Rather it is an improvement on repeating batteries. The image of the patent drawing is labeled, “Machine Gun,” in the drawing. That is merely a category, one of many used for firearms patents. However, based on the definition of machine gun, it does not meet the requirements for a machine gun. The machine gun inventions of John Moses Browning in comparison are quite different and*

*shouldn’t be compared as “like” inventions.*

11 National Historic Landmark Nomination: “Coltsville Historic District.” Pg. 32

# Appendix C:

**Books for Reference:**

Reference Books:

Fjestad, Steve. *Blue Book of Gun Values*. 40th Ed. Blue Book Publications, Inc: Minneapolis, MN, date: 2019.

*Note: This publication has many individualized books on firearms as well. You can access some information for free online or pay for an account to access it online.*

Fjestad, Steve and John B. Allen. *Blue Book of Antique American Firearms & Values*.

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*Based on books we use at the Cody Firearms Museum. There are many more that can be used, but these have been vetted by staff. Most of these are done by collectors rather than academic historians. Utilize much of the information for its technical history.*

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